KEY PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD PRACTICE IN THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Getting the involvement of young people in the Connexions Service is more likely to succeed when:

**Active involvement is seen as a key element of accountability** and especially when

- The Connexions Service embraces the notion that it must be accountable to the young people it serves.
- The Connexions Service and young people recognise that their active involvement is key to the service achieving accountability.

**The diversity of young people is recognised**

- Active involvement reflects the needs, hopes, ambitions and interests of all young people, and takes account of diverse community and individual interests and needs.
- Young people have equality of access to opportunities for involvement.
- Active involvement allows young people to become involved in ways, at levels and at a pace appropriate to their capacities and interests but taking into account the capacities and constraints on the Connexions Service/partner organisations.
- Involvement is underpinned by formal and informal capacity building and training.

**Young people are valued**

- They are listened to and actively involved in the development of the service.
- They receive swift and clear feedback about the impact and value of their contribution.
- The partnership between professionals and service users:
  - recognises young people’s competence and potential.
  - helps young people to become a resource to their own development and to that of their peers, the Connexions Service and the community.
- Communication with young people is honest and does not raise false expectations for active involvement and service delivery.
- Those responsible for providing the service are directly informed by the dialogue with young people.

**Involvement is underpinned by adequate resources of expertise, time, money and organisational systems and processes, including**

- Clear, widely communicated policy statements.
- A Charter of services and values – highlighting what is on offer.
- Staff recruitment, and development policies aimed at building a team with the qualities, attitudes and skills required to involve young people.
- Clear boundaries around what is possible in the areas of involvement and service delivery.
- Transparent and accessible procedures for suggestions, compliments, complaints and appeals.
- Clear policies on confidentiality and data collection/storage/dissemination.
- Structures to secure the representation of young people’s interests and concerns.

**There are systems and processes for evaluating and continuously improving young people’s involvement**

- Monitoring and evaluation should be undertaken – both by Connexions staff and independently (in both cases involving young people in the process) – and the lessons used to shape future planning.
Purpose of this guide

This guidance is offered to managers - those working at the strategic level of a Connexions Partnership or service, and those managing at the operational level within the Service (managing area teams or specialist initiatives). This guidance is not intended to be prescriptive - the approach is too new, individual service contexts are too diverse and the organisational environment changing too quickly for that. Instead, it is based on insights from recent practice in the partner services of careers companies, statutory and voluntary youth services, and community-based health and environmental organisations. All practice arising from the guidance will need to be set in the context of national legislation and local policies on such issues as health and safety, child protection, benefits regulations, equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice.

Managers are encouraged to discuss and critically consider the guidance with colleagues in the light of their own experience and local needs, priorities and resources.

The guidance is provided under the following headings:

The nature of active involvement
The rationale for active involvement
Objective-setting
Organising for active involvement
Delivering active involvement

The Appendices provide checklists to be used in conjunction with the main text. They include:

- a checklist of tasks and methods of involvement,
- the building blocks of effective involvement,
- a self-audit tool for organising for active involvement.

Finally there is a bibliography, providing information about youth participation in a wide range of organisations.

The guidance is based on a review of relevant literature and past and current practice; conversations with managers in Connexions pilot areas and in Connexions partnerships; two workshops with staff from the Connexions Service National Unit and four regional workshops with partnership staff.

The Connexions Service National Unit will continually review this publication. For further information about the guide or to provide updated practice on involving young people, contact Anthony Evans or Joy Danby at the Department for Education and Skills (tel: 0114 259 3756 or e-mail anthony.evans@dfes.gsi.gov.uk).
Section One
The nature of active involvement

Key messages:
Active involvement poses three key questions:
Involvement in what tasks?
Using which methods?
Which young people?

Involvement in what tasks?
The various tasks of involving young people can be thought of in terms of the ‘Plan-Do-Check-Review’ cycle in which lessons learned in each phase of the cycle are fed into the planning of the next cycle, to bring about continuous improvement. Examples of tasks concerned with Planning in the Connexions environment are:

- Identification of needs of local young people.
- Investigation of current provision.
- Definition of critical success factors for the service.
- Development of strategy, activities, objectives, plans.
- Development of organisation.
- Definition of indicators of 'success'.
- Definition of quality dimensions and standards.
- Design of specific involvement activity.
- Staff recruitment.
- Staff development.
- Negotiation of finance and other inputs.
- Assessment of suppliers.

Other tasks arranged within the cycle, are listed down the left-hand side of the matrix in Appendix 2.

For some people, a first reaction might be that involving young people in all these tasks is daunting if not totally unrealistic. This guidance takes as its starting point the conviction that given the availability of adequate training, support and information there is no form of active involvement by young people that is ruled out. The important points are:

- Where there’s a will, there’s a way. Primary tasks for senior managers will be to develop a consensus that ‘Active involvement is important and valuable’ (Section 2) – and set up the systems and manage the resources to translate those shared values into action (Section 4).
- Active involvement by young people in all aspects of the service is a fundamental goal to be attained as soon as practicable. However young people and staff will have different levels of understanding and comfort about potential starting points for involvement. Both need to be comfortable about the way ahead and learning resources and support systems should be available for both young people and staff to help build up their comfort zone. There are dangers in moving too fast – to set over-ambitious targets would put staff – and young people – into risky situations where failure could feed unhelpful prejudices.

1 See Appendix 1
2 Staff include as appropriate – professional staff, volunteers working in the service and volunteer or members of partnership boards and management committees.
The active involvement of young people in the Connexions Service, a Guide for Managers

Key issues for staff to consider

Goals
• What exactly do managers want participants to do?
• Is the immediate product of the involvement (for example the quality of the decision) more important than the process or other outcomes (e.g. personal/organisational growth) or vice versa?
• Do you have any hard and fast boundaries or are they negotiable? What messages might your position on these send to young people?

Securing participation
• Who can put you in touch with the young people you would most like to reach? Which local organisations have formal and informal contact with targeted groups?
• How could you alter your usual way of working to increase the likelihood of participation? Could you make it easier, more enjoyable, or more worthwhile for participants?

Training and support issues
• What skills and attitudes would young people need to participate? Which might they already have and how can you find out? These questions also apply to the staff involved.
• What training/coaching/mentoring opportunities might young people and the staff involved need?
• How should these be provided and by whom?
• What additional support might you require and who might provide this?
• Are there ways in which you could adapt your method of operation so that young people with fewer skills can get involved?

Outcomes
• What are the participants likely to get out of the experience?
• What might they want to get out of the experience - and can you arrange this?

Using which methods?
• Informal suggestion schemes.
• Surveys to canvass opinions.
• Consultation - focus groups.
• Consultation – creative approaches.
• Managing activities (e.g. in-service delivery).
• Membership of young people’s decision-making bodies.
• Membership of main decision-making bodies.

Progressing down this list the young person plays a more direct role with more impact on the outcomes of involvement. However, with each of these methods, there is plenty of scope for young people to assume different levels of power and responsibility.

Each of these broad methods3 has a place in the service’s repertoire of involvement, with different methods being more or less appropriate in different environments, for different young people and with different staff. The key issues that staff should consider in deciding the approaches to use are shown in the box below.

3These methods are a key component of the matrix in Appendix 2
Informal suggestion schemes

The initiative rests with adults in most of the methods listed. Suggestion schemes offer young people the chance to raise issues, give feedback or share ideas, unsolicited. For those who are less confident about speaking up directly, the service could provide opportunities such as suggestion boxes, graffiti walls, website/chat groups and telephone hot lines.

Surveys to canvass opinions

Surveys have some quite distinctive features:

- they use standard questions asked in a standard format, through face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, paper-based or computer-based questionnaires for example;
- they use sampling and they need to secure high response rates in order to ensure responses are representative of the target population. Reaching disaffected young people is a particular issue that managers will need to address. A key approach to including this group is outreach work undertaken by staff and by young people themselves as volunteers.

In the Connexions Service context surveys might be used to obtain information about young people's needs, service delivery issues (such as suitable venues and opening hours) and feedback about the quality of the service.

Consultation

Consultation is used to get 'the youth view' on key issues. Consultations can resemble surveys but can be far less structured, with less concern to achieve high response rates. Although the agenda is usually, but not always, set by management, experience suggests that much can be gained from providing scope for young people to set some or all of the agenda themselves.

- **Focus groups**
  Small groups of about 6-10 young people, led by a trained facilitator, debate open-ended questions around the issues

- **Creative approaches**
  Young people who are less confident or verbally accomplished can be encouraged to express their views, talk about their needs, or give feedback on the service – through methods such as **role-play and drama**, **video and photography** and/or **games and activities** at open days and residential events.

Managing activities

With training, young people can be responsible for many aspects of service delivery. These include: producing information for young people and may involve young people in writing, editing, and design; peer mentoring and support; brokering and advocacy work with various partner organisations, such as schools and colleges, housing providers and employment agencies; research work; input to staff development policy and provision; representing the organisation at conferences.

Different levels of involvement – depending on the stage of readiness (and interests) of the young people concerned – might include:

- working alongside adults.
- joint decision-making with adults.
- activities run by young people, with adults offering advice.
- activities delegated to young people, with adults giving advice only when requested.
- activities chosen, planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated by the young people.
Membership of young people’s decision-making bodies

These may run in parallel with the corresponding adult committee on which the young people’s views are represented (meeting just before the main committee and discussing a very similar agenda). Alternatively, the young people’s body may have its own agenda and raise its own issues for the main adult committee to consider, whether or not young people are directly represented on it. Whatever mechanism is chosen to represent young people’s views, the process must be transparent – everyone must be clear about how young people’s views are to be taken into account including how their impact on decision-making will be monitored and demonstrated.

Membership of main decision-making boards

Young people might take part in various decision-making bodies – including partnership boards, management committees, special interest groups, recruitment and selection panels, HRD advisory groups, monitoring and inspection panels. They might participate as:

- full voting members – in which case they have a lot of power and responsibility and will usually require substantial training and support.
- regular members but simply as representatives of their peers – presenting a case but with no control over the outcomes. This is still a powerful learning opportunity and carries substantial responsibility, though less power.
- representatives of a working group, with a remit to investigate a particular aspect of the functioning of the organisation. Again there is considerable responsibility but limited control over the outcomes.
- guests invited along when the committee wants ‘the youth perspective’ on a particular issue. Although there will be limited responsibility or power, this may be exactly what some young people want – underlining the need for a variety of types and levels of involvement.

The ‘ground rules’ of allocation of power and responsibility must be agreed in advance with the young people and adults involved, taking care to avoid the perception of tokenism. If young people’s views are not taken seriously – and seen to have an impact – they will be much less willing to participate in future.

Which young people?

Although all 13-19 year olds are potential users of the service, not all will be interested in becoming shapers of the service. Nevertheless, one of the main purposes of active involvement is to make the service more responsive to the needs of all young people, and therefore it is important to ensure inclusivity. The young people who do take part in shaping or delivering the service should be broadly representative of the diverse groups within the local community. If this is not the case, partnerships should identify the actions required to overcome barriers to the involvement of under-represented groups. There may be particular difficulties in securing involvement where the practitioners involved are seen by young people as having an enforcement element to their work.

Not all young people will want to be involved at the highest level all of the time, so it is important to have a wide variety of opportunities for involvement, catering for the diversity of young people’s interests, talents and needs. There should always be open and honest communication with young people so that everyone has clear and realistic expectations of involvement.

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4See Appendix 3

5In other words, getting involved in the various tasks of the Plan-Do-Check-Review cycle, to help shape the future of the Service.

6As summarised under ‘The diversity of young people is recognised’ in the ‘Key Principles for Good practice’ inside the cover of this guidance.

7in terms of background, gender, race, religion, ability, disability, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics
Section Two
The rationale for involvement

Key messages:
The rationale for active involvement needs to be discussed among partners.
The Connexions Service’s accountability to young people is dependent on their active involvement.
There are benefits to active involvement for young people, the Connexions Service and the community.

Although the various partners involved in the Connexions Service may be approaching involvement from a variety of perspectives, a common sense of purpose should be achieved from the outset.

There are probably five main reasons that people might give for involving young people in the running of the Connexions Service:

• ‘the government tells us to and we’ll be evaluated against it’.
• ‘Connexions will be a better service if we do’.
• ‘young people will benefit from being involved in decision-making’.
• ‘the health of our democratic society depends on the active involvement of young people in society’.
• ‘it is a young person’s right to be listened to and involved’.

It is important to clarify where people are coming from and to agree a primary focus. Each of these beliefs has different implications both for the tasks and methods in which young people are involved, and for the criteria used to measure ‘success’. Managers will need to discuss – widely and persistently – the rationale for active involvement in order to encourage staff and young people to embrace the notion that the service must be accountable to young people and that active involvement is key to achieving this. In examining these beliefs in more detail, it will be useful for people to consider the following benefits.

Benefits for the young people

• Learning – about themselves, about taking responsibility, about working with others and about how organisations work. (Accreditation of such learning is an added bonus.)
• Development of a range of new skills – and support in applying them to new situations.
• Increased confidence and self esteem, as a result of being taken seriously.
• Increased ability to influence the way in which organisations work.
• An attractive, high quality service, which is responsive to their needs.
• An empowering environment – raising their aspirations.
Benefits for the Connexions Service

- Achievement of Connexions goals – because active involvement, when managed well, develops young people's skills, raises aspirations and helps them to reach their full potential.

- Obtaining information cost effectively from young people themselves about, for example:
  - the changing attitudes and needs of local young people.
  - young people's views of what constitutes 'quality' in service provision (and whether Connexions is meeting these criteria).
  - key barriers to accessing learning/development opportunities.
  - the services that young people do use - and the key success factors for attracting young people.

- A service that is designed, delivered and evaluated on the basis of identified – rather than presumed – needs and interests of young people.

- Innovation – young people can offer a fresh perspective on the way in which the service should be delivered, to meet the identified needs.

- Access to young people's informal networks – increasing the service's potential to make contact with all young people in the 13-19 age group.

- Credibility for and 'buy-in' to the service from young people.

- Accountability to Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU).

Benefits for the community

- More young people better prepared with the skills and attitudes to engage in learning, employment and to participate in the community.

- Positive experiences of involvement in Connexions may help to break down common attitudes of 'What's the point of taking part – nothing ever happens as a result' – leading to:
  - more active involvement of young people in their local community.
  - improved democratic processes.
Section Three

Objective-setting for active involvement

Key message:
Active involvement should be subject to the process of setting and measuring the achievement of objectives.

The development of SMART\(^8\) objectives for a defined time period should include ‘active involvement of young people’ and be part of business plans.

There are various ways of measuring the success of your management effort in encouraging the active involvement of young people. The CSNU is developing its own management information requirements and no indicators have been set nationally for involving young people. In the meantime you are encouraged to develop your own measures locally. A balanced approach to setting objectives and measuring progress is recommended - one that addresses a range of dimensions and range of ‘stakeholders’. The table below illustrates potential areas of measurement, based on:

- a standard Inputs, Processes, Outputs, Outcomes model of project evaluation.
- the perspectives of the CSNU, the service users, the service partners, their staff and local communities.
- a set of indicators derived from work by the Audit Commission:
  - Effectiveness - in achieving, say, the overall aims of appropriate and better policy and service design, delivery and management through young people’s active contribution.
  - Efficacy - are the processes securing the involvement of many different young people in many different ways?
  - Efficiency - what was achieved from involvement compared with what was put into it?
  - Economy - the cost of securing the relevant resources.
  - Equity - of the processes in their treatment of staff and young people who differ on such characteristics as background, gender, race, religion, ability, disability, and sexual orientation.
  - Ethicality - of the processes in the service’s approach to young people and staff, including dealing with matters such as respect for the decision not to get involved, confidentiality, abuse etc.

The indicators in the table on page 12 are suggestions rather than recommendations.

It is important:

- to appreciate that they are simply illustrations - you are encouraged to select, improve, create your own.
- to focus on key indicators, rather than get overwhelmed by collecting too much data.
- to check the indicators out with the relevant stakeholder.
- in setting targets for achievement in these areas, to make sure that they are stretching, but not so much that managers are setting themselves up to fail and those who are sceptical about active involvement can have their prejudices confirmed.
- to base choices around local circumstances and priorities and the service’s state of readiness for active involvement.
- to develop gradually in a phased building block approach – ‘We can’t do X till Y is in place, so these are the main areas for Year 1, Year 2, Year 3’ and so on.

\(^8\)Specific, Measurable, Achievable – suitably challenging for those who have responsibility for delivering them, Realistic in terms of resources available and the effect of other factors and within a set Time frame
One model for developing active involvement is shown in Appendix 4. In partnerships where there is some ambivalence towards active involvement, the first stage might be to create the atmosphere in which it can thrive. Objectives in this case might focus on the production of a Youth Charter; meetings with staff, perhaps in groups, to discuss their concerns about active involvement; visits to, or visitors from, partnerships where good practice has been established; surveys of young people’s satisfaction with staff attitudes and so on. From then on, progress will depend on collective experience in using particular forms of involvement with specific groups. First stage objectives might focus on passing on this knowledge to other partners; for example, measuring the attitudes and skills development of other staff. Later stages might be to develop new methods, new tasks of involvement or the targeting of different groups.

The model:

• underlines the importance of having a variety of methods of involvement available to maximize the chances of meeting the needs and interests of a variety of young people.
• illustrates the importance of having the fundamentals in place before aiming higher.
Section Four
Organising for active involvement

Key messages:
Active involvement must be built-in and fully embedded in all key aspects of the organisation.
Embedding is probably best achieved if it is tackled from the outset using a systematic approach that identifies the key elements of an organisation.

Built-in not bolt-on
Past experience shows that young people and adults have been frustrated by a ‘bolt-on’ approach, in which active involvement is valuable and high-profile in the short-term, but disappears when particular staff and/or young people move on. The culture and practices of the rest of the organisation remain untouched.

To sustain real benefits, active involvement must be built-in and fully embedded in all key aspects of the organisation. This is illustrated in Figure 1, which is derived from the 7S framework by Peters and Waterman. Embedding will be easier to achieve if it is designed in from the outset.

The principle of shared values was at the heart of the issues discussed in Section 2 - this section outlines some of the key points for the remaining 5s.
**Shared Values**

For real involvement to take place, young people must be valued and must feel valued – as outlined in the third bullet point in the Key Principles statement at the front of this guidance.

Practical ways of moving forward to develop shared values include:

- Developing a Youth Charter (this requirement is identified in the Planning Guidance) and clear staff guidelines - which inform everyone about rights and expectations.
- Developing an Equal Opportunities culture (see Appendix 7).
- Appointing youth involvement champions – real enthusiasts – who will develop and promote active involvement opportunities and good practice.
- Modelling appropriate behaviour – treating your staff in the way you would want them to treat young people, with honesty and respect – setting the tone for the organisation's commitment to active involvement.
- Making it matter – ensuring that involvement is rewarded\(^9\) and that negative attitudes among staff towards involvement are challenged.
- Providing support for those managers and staff for whom this represents a significant culture change, and raises emotions that may be difficult to recognise and to handle.
- Publicising success stories – showing how young people have made a difference – to combat common attitudes that 'It can't work' or 'No-one ever takes any notice of us'.

**Strategy**

Strategic planning is based on identifying:

- 'Where we want to be' (the vision, values and objectives discussed in previous sections).
- A realistic appraisal of 'Where we are now' in terms of staff skills and attitudes, resources and structures/systems for delivering active involvement.
- A phased approach in moving from the latter to the former.

Experience so far suggests that it helps to:

- Plan for short term wins, to build morale and a 'can-do' mentality.
- Ensure that no assumptions are made about what young people can and can’t do – but build in time to develop relationships with them, continually re-visit their needs and wants and build plans around them.
- Clarify what is required and be honest about what is possible, but allow for flexibility in routes to achievement.
- Not waiting for everything to be perfect – it never will be – but taking the plunge with Plan-Do-Check-Review. The emphasis should be on Review and the learning from each cycle, publicising successes to combat pessimistic attitudes from some young people and others.

“It's important to get values and principles clear but the talk can only go so far. After that, it’s a case of getting stuck in, taking risks, no doubt making mistakes, but making sure you learn from them and build up your own theory of how involvement is best handled. Involve young people as a matter of course and then reflect every now and then on which groupings are involved in what, and where the extra effort to make contact needs to be made.”

\(^9\)See Appendix 5, which sets out guidance from Department for Work and Pensions on Reward Policies.
Structures

Strategic managers will need to:

• build into current structures (for example management boards, channels of communication, hierarchies of responsibility) plans to introduce or develop the active involvement of young people. This might include agreeing modes of behaviour and procedures, such as acceptable language/avoiding jargon, voting rights, and so on.

• decide when to work through existing structures and when to set up new ones (for example parallel youth committees or other forms of representation).

• tap into existing youth participation structures outside the Connexions Service, such as local youth councils, for information, advice, and in some cases to establish contact with appropriate groups of young people. Some schools and colleges already have mechanisms such as young people’s councils through which they are consulting and otherwise involving young people.

Skills

Strategic managers will need to ensure an adequate skills base – both through recruitment and selection, and through staff development. Key points to keep in mind are:

• some involvement methods require expertise in facilitation, technical skills such as questionnaire development and analysis, and video production.

• for all those directly concerned with actively involving young people the primary qualities lie in the areas of commitment to young people, sensitivity to the transition of young people from dependence to independence and an ability to cope with youthful high spirits, whilst the primary skills required are communication skills (e.g. active listening, effective questioning, getting a message across – verbally and non-verbally – and giving constructive feedback), team building, conflict resolution, emotional literacy (the ability to recognise and register one’s own emotions – and to ‘read’ those of others – in order to develop balanced responses, rather than being ‘swept along’ by one’s own emotions or ‘triggered’ by those of others), reflective practice (analysing practice in the light of available theories and testing these theories through planning and monitoring practice) and anti-oppressive practice.

• it is helpful to develop links with experienced staff in other agencies and sectors, to increase the capacity of the partnership to deliver active involvement.

Staffing

Strategic managers will need to:

• ensure adequate numbers – staff/service user ratios will affect the organisation’s capacity to engage in the more time-consuming approaches to involving young people. Whilst active involvement should be part of everyone’s responsibility, some services might choose to employ specialist involvement champions and experts and some might reduce personal advisers’ caseloads to allow them to develop this role.

• ensure that active involvement informs the development of the job description and person specification for new staff.

• ensure that young people who are interested in becoming involved in the recruitment and selection system for personal advisers, are recruited, trained, supported.

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“The young people asked the most searching questions. Their degree of involvement clinched my interest in the job.” A Connexions Service manager, recently appointed through a recruitment process involving young people.

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10At least two Connexions pilots have involved young people in recruitment of personal advisers.
• ensure that sufficient development opportunities are available for staff so that they have the appropriate knowledge, skills and personal qualities to engage young people in working together.

Strategic managers will need to:

• develop guidelines around the use of young people as voluntary and paid staff, including the rationale for recruitment, the type of posts for which they would be considered and the rewards, support and training that will be available. Then allocate resources to provide these rewards, support and training opportunities.

• identify ways to make participation in the service attractive to young people (See Appendix 5). One pilot has paid young people to recruit people from similar backgrounds.

Example
A girl with no qualifications who played truant for most of her last two years in school has been able to reach disaffected young people because of her own experiences. It was reported “She tells them how important it is to get their views heard - and the very fact that she has such a job shows that this is no empty rhetoric on the part of the authorities”.

Systems
Premises
The location and style of premises used for the service and for any active involvement exercises will affect the outcomes. Managers will need to consider both physical and psychological access. Physical access includes accessibility by public transport as well as wheelchair access for the physically impaired. Psychological access could include the difficulty of entering premises with a history of negative experiences, or the lack of enthusiasm for entering a building considered ‘boring’ or uncomfortable.

It is important to use premises where young people feel sufficiently at ease to be able to make their contribution and to have opportunities available at times that fit in with young people’s hectic lives. (These may not accord with the preferences of staff, requiring compromises or incentives for one or other party.) Some services are building-in social areas where not only can young people socialise, meet and plan informally, but also staff can meet young people in less formal settings.

Rewards policies and systems
• Staff should receive regular feedback on their performance, and performance must be seen to matter – for example, rewarding good performance and taking appropriate action with those who are falling short. (Managers will need to identify what is needed in the way of mentoring, counselling, training, incentives or discipline to achieve improved performance and to ensure that resources are available to deliver all this.)

• Resources will also need to be made available to provide incentives to young people. Managers need to be aware of:
  - guidance on Rewards Policies from the Department for Work and Pensions is in Appendix 5.
  - the problem that money can get people there in body but not necessarily in spirit. Young people can provide advice on what they would see as appropriate rewards.

Example
In one pilot a group of young recruiters hired a ‘bucking bronco’ to encourage young people to complete a questionnaire with a free ride on completion. They built on this by taking photos of the people riding and awarding prizes for various categories (e.g. staying on longest, riding with the most style and so on) – but to collect their photo and/or their prizes, the young people had to go to a meeting.
Accreditation systems

Systems for accrediting the organisation, and for accrediting the knowledge and skills of staff and young people, can help maintain and give a positive impetus to the involvement of young people.

Managers should consider reviewing the service’s practices on accreditation especially:

• to what extent do they further the involvement of young people?

• what arrangements need to be made to ensure that knowledge and skills acquired through active involvement are accredited?

Communication and feedback systems

How accessible to young people are the current systems – and what improvements could be made to advance active involvement? Do such systems use the skills of specialist agencies to communicate with hard-to-reach groups? Publication of the outcomes of any feedback provided by young people is essential.

Systems for assuring active involvement of young people

These should be integrated with quality systems for the service as a whole. Indicators for monitoring are on page 11.

Example

One pilot is supporting young people in developing, from the outset, a kite-mark system aiming to ensure that services seeking the award are significantly ‘young people friendly’ in their policies and practices. Young people, trained as assessors, are central to the awarding decisions.

Style

Strategic managers should aim to develop a management and organisational style supporting active involvement by:

• creating a climate in which staff feel able to express any views or anxieties about involving young people in the expectation that these will be addressed in a constructive way.

• creating an innovative and empowering environment. Success depends on developing a culture in which mistakes or unsuccessful initiatives are seen as learning experiences rather than occasions for blame – and ensuring that such learning (as well as that from more successful ventures) is fed back in to inform future strategy and practice.

• developing the service as an emotionally literate organisation. The life circumstances of many young people will raise feelings for them when coming into contact with the service. The processes of active involvement will also raise feelings for staff. Managers should aim to build a culture, climate and core processes in which it is seen as important to handle these feelings constructively rather than merely to suppress them. This will be a key developmental task.
Section Five
Delivering active involvement

Key message:
There are five key steps to achieving effective delivery of active involvement. This is a new field of activity and good practice is still emerging.

Once the Active Involvement strategy is agreed and the structures, systems and resources are in place to support it, operational management is about attracting and retaining young people for involvement work. The service will achieve this by choosing and offering desirable ‘activities’.

There are five steps to this:

- **Identifying specific target groups of young people** that the service wants to involve. At particular moments, this will depend on their aspirations, capabilities and potential – and the organisation's capability to engage meaningfully with them.

- **Research for involvement** - understanding the current needs and capabilities of different staff and different groups of young people, understanding how young people choose to get involved or not, identifying what other organisations are doing (as partners or as potential competitors for young people’s involvement).

- **Developing the activities** - tasks and methods that will meet both the service's and the young people's needs sufficiently to attract significant numbers and be effective.

- **Deciding the support mix** - what the service expects young people to ‘pay’ (for example in time and commitment), what they will receive in return and how to promote this. Decide how to give young people access to the activities (for example directly, or through work of other organisations; face-to-face or on the web or telephone; in buildings or on the streets).

- **Monitoring and control** - get feedback from young people and others about their satisfaction with the involvement activity. Gather other relevant data for judging performance on various dimensions (see Table on page 22). Feeding the results of monitoring or quality assurance back to young people in an accessible and user friendly way will be an important aspect of this, as will changing the activities offered, or the support mix, as indicated by the results.
Emerging good practice

There is no blueprint to identify one starting point. However, certain patterns of interesting practice are emerging. For example:

Asserting the values
• Valuing young people One service has decided from the outset to progress on the basis that:
  - young people will be regarded as partners in the service.
  - young people are competent (as compared with society’s usual default position of young people as incompetent).
• Accountability Another service has already developed a Charter and consulted widely on it to provide a value-driven platform for future developments.

Co-working and joint examination of learning from experience
• Developing people One pilot has approached mapping as a developmental exercise, using consultancy mainly to help partners (the careers company, the youth service, voluntary organisation staff and young people) to plan, carry out, reflect on, analyse and evaluate the findings and the process.
• Conferences Several services are developing a series of youth conferences, planned and delivered by multi-agency teams with representation from young people as part of their mapping and constituency-building activities.
• Residential experience This has become an essential feature of many recent DfES initiatives. Those young people involved in designing and delivering such activities should pool their experience to inform the development of similar activities through Connexions.

Engaging young people in the development of core systems
This guidance has already highlighted examples of pilots that are involving young people centrally in quality assurance, recruitment, selection and outreach systems. In others, staffing strategies for one-stop shops and promotional activity are primary areas of involvement. Their resulting visibility, when highlighted in service publicity, is giving positive messages to other young people.
Section Six
Conclusion

Involving young people is a relatively new and exciting area and one in which there is still plenty of scope for innovation.

The extent to which the active involvement of young people is envisaged within the Connexions Service probably makes it unique among major government programmes. If the concept of involving young people is fully embraced we believe this factor alone will go a long way towards ensuring that the Connexions Service is highly valued by young people.

We look forward to learning about, and helping to spread, good practice in involving young people as it develops among partnerships in the future.
Appendix 1
The Plan-Do-Check-Review cycle of reflective, effective practice

Plan
- Set objectives
- Identify critical success factors
- Plan key steps towards meeting objectives
- Identify ways of monitoring progress against objectives and critical success factors

Review
- Assess effectiveness of plan
- Identify reasons for effectiveness and implications for future plans

Check
- Monitor achievement against objectives
- Monitor critical success factors (e.g. what else was going on in young people's lives that might have contributed to achievement – or not – of objectives)

Do
- Implement the plan
Appendix 2
A checklist of tasks and methods for identifying current involvement and planning future development

Successful models of active involvement of young people show them participating in a variety of circumstances. Different groups of young people and different issues will need different approaches. It is not always going to be an easy or a quick task. It can take time and effort to ensure that young people and others are fully able to participate. In particular, hard to reach groups such as vulnerable young people, young people with disabilities, young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, will require support to help them participate. At a recent conference, when staff were asked what roles young people could not play in the Connexions Service - assuming the necessary training, support and information were available - the answer was ‘none’.

With the right support from a Connexions Service, young people can be involved in a huge range of activities. With effective training and support both for young people and management/practitioners, young people can be actively involved in: planning and organising; doing and delivering; checking, reviewing and learning. The table on page 23 illustrates the wide range of possibilities.
The table above is in line with work carried out by National Youth Agency for Local Government Association on developing standards for active involvement.
Appendix 3
Young People as Company Directors

The information below is the position as of February 2001 as outlined by the Department of Trade and Industry on young people as Company Directors on a Connexions Partnership Board of Directors.

Under Company Law, the liability and role of Directors is determined by the legal status of the company and it is the responsibility of Connexions Partnerships to determine their own company status and adhere to the rules that apply. For example, Directors of a registered charity will have different liability to those of a limited company.

It is always advisable for a Connexions Partnership to seek legal advice before accepting a young person as a Director on the Board.

Can a young person become a Company Director?

Generally anyone can be a Company Director and it is up to the members to appoint the people they believe will run the company well on their behalf. The only restrictions that prevent anyone becoming a Director are:

- The person must not have been disqualified by a court from acting as a Company Director (unless he or she has been given leave (permission) to act by a court for a particular company).
- The person must not be an undischarged bankrupt (except with leave of the court).
- Registered Charities cannot have young people under the age of 18 years as Trustees due to financial liability.
- Some people not of British nationality are restricted as to what work they may do while in this country. If you need more information about whether such a person can become a Director of a UK registered company, contact Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department, Lunar House, Wellesley Road, Croydon, CR9 2BY (Tel: 020 8686 0688).

Is there a Minimum Age Limit for Company Directors?

"There is no minimum age limit in the Companies Act for a Director to be appointed in England and Wales. However, he or she must be able to consent to their own appointment" (GAB1) (i.e. They should be of sound mind and understand the structures and processes behind their appointment). Partnerships should seek legal advice if they intend to have a young person as a Director of your Company.

NB: Although the young person is responsible for their own consent, in practice, if something goes seriously wrong, it may well be their parents/guardians who bear the consequences. For this reason, parents and guardians must always be fully informed of their, and their child’s, true liability. (NCVO Guidelines ‘Under Age: The Legal Position of Minors on the Board’. See page 24 for contact details.)
What is the liability of young people as Company Directors?

The status and liability of young people as Directors as with other Directors is determined by the legal status of the company and should be stated in the company’s Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Therefore, if the Board wish the young people to have different legal and financial liability from other Directors, this needs to be stated in the MoU.

Are there any child protection issues under the Children Act 1989 for young people as Company Directors?

There are some, especially where work is carried out to profit a solely money making organisation. There are also child protection issues which state a young person of school age:

- Cannot work between the hours of 9.30am - 4.30pm, or before 7.00am and after 7.00pm.
- Cannot work more than 2 hours per school week day.
- Cannot work in the hour prior to school activities.
- Cannot work for more than 2 hours on a Sunday.
- Cannot work for more than 8 hours on a Saturday or school holiday days (if under 15 years old, 5 hours).
- Cannot work more than 35 hours per week during school holidays (if under 15 years old, 25 hours).

Connexions Partnerships should avoid inviting young people of school age to participate in Board meetings during school hours.

Further reading and resource information

- Department of Trade & Industry (Companies House) Guidance Books GAB1 and GAB2 (Tel: 0113 233 8338). Guides available on (www.companieshouse.gov.uk).
- ‘Easy Guide to Your Kids Life at Work’ – Children’s Legal Centre (Tel: 01206 873 820).
- ‘Under Age: The Legal Position of Minors on the Board’ – NCVO (Tel: 020 7713 6161).
- ‘Supporting Young Adult Board Members.’ - NCVO.
- ‘Young Members: a hidden governance resource.’ - NCVO guidance on how to engage young people in Boards.
Appendix 4
The Building Blocks of Effective Involvement
(Adapted from Taylor, 1999)

- Membership of decision-making bodies (whether mainstream groups or parallel youth forums).
- Representing the service at conferences.
- In production of publicity and information/guidance materials.
- As peer tutors/supporters.
- Brokering with service providers.
- Involved in staff recruitment, selection and training.
- Membership of monitoring/inspection teams.

Consulting young people about, for example
- their needs.
- the quality of the service.
- ways in which it could be improved.
- the attractiveness of new plans for the service.

Developing:
- clear ‘ground rules’ for engagement with the service (including, for example, youth charters).
- two-way channels of communication.
- skills-building opportunities (for staff and young people).
- a ‘young person friendly’ environment (both physically and emotionally).
- reflective and anti-discriminatory practice.
- the Personal Adviser/service user, one-to-one relationship is the bedrock of the service’s active involvement strategy. The young person is given time, respect, skilled support and timely information through which to feel a full partner in the process of their own development, not having it ‘done to’ them.

NB This is not meant to imply that involvement at the highest level is the ultimate goal for all young people – simply that, for those who do want to be involved at this level, the organisation needs to have the other building blocks in place.
Appendix 5 - Rewards Policies

Cash may be allowable for one-off rewards – but not for work. Income in its broadest sense means regular payments relating to a period of time. Capital on the other hand is a one-off lump sum not related to periods. So, if a one-off payment is given as an incentive it is unlikely to affect benefit unless that child or young person already has £3,000 (see background information below).

If it is a regular payment in respect of a series of workshops/consultations it is likely to be considered as income. This is taken into account up to the amount of benefit given to the parents for that child. In the case of a young person claiming in their own right, it would be taken into account penny for penny.

If it is given in kind – e.g. as a store voucher, a bus pass, cinema tickets, sports centre entry passes it would not affect benefit as there is a capital disregard for personal possessions and an income disregard for in kind payments.

Another option would be to pay a third party – the cinema, sports centre, bus company - rather than give money to the child or young person. Income paid to a third party in respect of a claimant or member of their family is disregarded as long as it is intended and used for an item other than food, ordinary clothing, footwear, fuel, rent and council tax met by Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit.

Unless the payment is made in respect of providing DfES with a service then the issue of earnings for work done would probably not arise, but there is the potential, especially if the child/young person does produce something for DfES in return for the payment. It would depend on the nature of what is expected, whether there is some kind of written or unwritten contract/understanding between the parties.

There is another possibility – using the Education Maintenance Allowance. There is a complete disregard on EMA for benefit purposes. But, of course, EMA is only payable to young people who remain in education post-16 and is specifically directed at keeping young people in non-advanced education, so it probably isn’t suitable in the majority of cases.

Background Information

13 to 15 year olds
Do not qualify for benefit in their own right but if they have savings over £3,000 no personal allowance or child’s disability premium will be paid for that child to the benefit recipient.

16 & 17 year olds and Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA)
In general, 16 and 17 year olds are not entitled to benefit but certain unemployed young people in prescribed groups can get JSA, as can those who can demonstrate that they would suffer severe hardship if JSA was not paid (though the latter group are time-limited).

Young people who are estranged from, or living apart from, their parents, for good reasons (including the possibility of abuse) is one of the prescribed groups who can get JSA while looking for work or training. Other examples of those in the prescribed group are couples with a child, a person released from prison/detention who is registered for a job/training who has good reason for living independently of their parents, and those who have accepted a firm offer to enlist with the armed forces within the next eight weeks.

Any income will affect the amount of benefit payable.

16 & 17 year olds and Income Support (IS)
Income Support is available for people who do not have to demonstrate their availability for work and training, for example, young people who are sick or disabled, or who are lone parents, or who are continuing in non-advanced full-time education whilst estranged from their parents.

Any income will affect the amount of benefit payable.

Under 25s
IS/JSA personal allowances for single young people up to age 25 are less than those for people over 25. This takes account of the fact that the majority of this group live in someone else’s household and it can therefore be reasonably assumed that they have fewer financial responsibilities than older people who are more likely to live independently. For lone parents, a higher rate may be payable, depending on circumstances.
Appendix 6
Self-audit tool for organising for active involvement

This simple checklist is a tool to help structure discussion and decision-making when ‘organising for active involvement’ as described in Section 4 of this guidance.

Use

The checklist can be used by individuals or in various groups: management committees; staff; management teams; planning groups.

The tool enables users to summarise their position at any particular time with reference to five possible states, by putting a tick in the relevant column:

1. **Not a priority (Not)**
   
   This is not necessarily negative. Low priority might reflect an intention to sequence activity, since everything cannot be done at once. Or it may reflect disagreement with the proposition.

2. **Being considered (Con)**
   
   The task is being considered; the need for it to be addressed now is being assessed.

3. **Being planned (Plan)**
   
   Preliminary work has begun (or the need agreed) and planning work is built into the agreed action plan for the partnership service plan (though not necessarily for the coming year).

4. **Being implemented (Do)**
   
   Action is now underway, to implement decisions and plans related to this task.

5. **Being evaluated (Eval)**
   
   Has been done and is now being reviewed and evaluated.

Throughout the table

\[ AI = \text{Active Involvement of Young People} \]
Appendix 6 - Self-audit tool for organising for active involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSESSING CONTEXT</th>
<th>Not</th>
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<th>Plan</th>
<th>Do</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surface and explore partner’s current values, views and experience of AI.</td>
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<td>Discuss and understand mandate from DfES regarding AI.</td>
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<td>Establish key stakeholders’ perceptions of AI and relevant interests.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss ‘why involve young people’ and ‘how’ with all staff throughout the service, and as people join.</td>
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<td>Agree explicitly that active involvement is a core purpose.</td>
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<td>Establish and use clear shared values which underpin active involvement.</td>
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<td>Develop a Charter or similar to communicate the position externally and internally.</td>
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<td>Create a balanced scorecard of objectives of AI.</td>
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<td>Assess current resources and expertise within the organisation for AI.</td>
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<td>Assess external resources, e.g. other agencies who can help or collaborate with AI.</td>
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<td>Create a strategic plan, with sufficient resources, allocated to various forms, etc.</td>
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<td>Build AI into current structures.</td>
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<td>Decide how other AI work will be co-ordinated and controlled.</td>
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<td>Identify who will be accountable for successful implementation of AI strategy.</td>
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<td>Develop relationships and links with relevant local organisations with expertise in active involvement.</td>
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<th>ESTABLISHING RELEVANT SYSTEMS</th>
<th>Not</th>
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<td>Develop guidelines for how premises and equipment will be appropriate to AI objectives.</td>
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<td>Develop rewards policy that encourages AI.</td>
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<td>Review/develop accreditation procedures for AI.</td>
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<td>Ensure young people have easy access to communication and feedback systems.</td>
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<td>Develop monitoring and evaluation systems for AI.</td>
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<td>Ensure budgeting and financial management systems support AI directly and indirectly.</td>
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<td>Ensure active involvement skills and work are addressed in all job descriptions, including those for personal advisers and volunteers</td>
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<td>Secure appropriate specialist staff to support AI work</td>
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<td>Develop and use a staff development strategy (including management development) which underpins AI</td>
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<th>ENSURING RIGHT SKILLS</th>
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<td>Ensure management, including top managers, commits itself to achieving and supporting success in active involvement</td>
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<td>Become clear about what the organisation needs to be good at to sustain effective AI</td>
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<td>Ensure a range of individual and collective capacity-building initiatives, to support the development of confidence and competence of young people in relation to their involvement in the service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure a range of individual and collective capacity-building initiatives, to support the development of confidence and competence of staff in relation to active involvement work with young people</td>
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<td>Develop participative management style to encourage innovation and empowerment</td>
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<td>Foster a service culture where appropriate risk-taking and learning from experience is the norm</td>
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<td>Develop a collective understanding of emotional literacy and see that its significance for the culture of the organisation is explored</td>
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The table above is in line with work carried out by National Youth Agency for Local Government Association on developing standards for active involvement.
Appendix 7

Equal Opportunities Best Practice Principles

(This is a new supplement to Section Q of the Connexions Business Planning Guidance).

Introduction

Extending opportunity and equality of opportunity is one of the eight key principles that underpin the new Connexions Service. It cannot be treated as a one-off project or a series of activities that can be grafted onto the Connexions Service’s functions. It is something that must permeate the whole of the Service – that is, it must be part of each organisation’s culture and core practice.

Equality of opportunity applies not only to the areas covered by the Race Relations, Sex Discrimination, Disability Discrimination and Human Rights Acts. It links to the responsibility that each service will have for its local community, an issue that will be encompassed in the proposed changes to the race relation legislation to place a duty on all public bodies to promote equal opportunities. However, the Connexions Service will be asked to do more than merely comply with legislation. The 7th principle set out in “Connexions: The best start in life for every young person” is “Extending opportunity and equality of opportunity”. This means that the Connexions Service’s equal opportunities responsibilities go much wider to cover all areas where an individual or group of individuals is disadvantaged by virtue of their appearance, status or background. This ranges from individuals who experience bullying behaviour to those who have had to care for a relative on a long-term basis and as a result are subject to discriminatory action. It also extends, for example, to those who are disadvantaged because their religion or sexuality does not conform to the views of others.

Of particular concern are those individuals who are affected by multiple disadvantages such as disabled people who are from a black and minority ethnic group. The Connexions Service must be sensitive enough to be able to identify and address the needs of these individuals.

Each Connexions Service will have to demonstrate that it meets the five broad equal opportunity principles set out below. These have been identified, in consultation with a number of organisations including the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) as encompassing the totality of Connexions Service operation and activity.

These five broad areas will inform the development of the equal opportunities dimension of the Connexions quality standards as expressed in the Ofsted Inspection Framework and Quality Management Framework. It is against these frameworks that each Connexions partnership will be inspected including an evaluation of individual policies and plans. These areas will also be a key element in the internal quality assurance processes of each Connexions partnership.

Work will take place during the first year of the operation of the Connexions Service to identify and publish best practice.
1. Management and Business Structures and Policies

Principle - Every Connexions Service will need to establish management structures, including senior and board level accountability, policies and an implementation plan to deliver their equal opportunities obligations.

A best practice approach would encompass the following elements:

a. The organisation has a discrete equal opportunities policy document for outside publication covering strategy and implementation. In particular, it includes a summary in a form that young people and their parents/carers can understand, that sets out their rights and responsibilities, and a summary that can be used for reference by its staff. The document:
   • takes into account a local area’s requirements;
   • incorporates a baseline assessment of equality related issues;
   • highlights activity for each aspect of equality (gender, race, disability etc.) that is based on the assessment of the local situation;
   • sets out the service’s equality aims and objectives;
   • is endorsed by the Chair and Chief Executive.

b. The organisation’s business plan:
   • identifies a board member and a member of the senior management team who will actively promote, and take responsibility for equal opportunities in the service’s activities and internal arrangements;
   • identifies resources to be allocated for the implementation of the organisation’s equal opportunities plan;
   • specifies equality training including general awareness and its advocacy role in promoting equal opportunities. It also highlights training opportunities for members of the board and senior management team.

c. The organisation conducts equal opportunities audits on a regular basis with follow-up action on the findings.

d. The organisation’s Annual Report includes an account of its activity on equal opportunities.

2. The Service

Principle - Every Connexions Service will need to set up and monitor systems to ensure that the complete range of services offered, including those delivered outside the service premises, are consistent with and promote equal opportunity objectives.

A best practice approach would encompass the following elements:

a. The organisation conducts:
   • an initial baseline audit of company products including information, publications, systems as well as a disability audit of access to premises and services.
   • regular reviews to identify and highlight both positive and negative aspects of the full range of services, policies and procedures. This includes information systems, guidance, interaction with young people (e.g. through the reception, phone web, printed material, outreach contact etc.), access to premises, resources and materials, and referral to learning opportunities/jobs etc.

b. The organisation’s complaints procedures is able to address discrimination issues, covering complaints about the service itself and outside providers.

c. The complaints procedure also includes appropriate referral mechanisms to organisations such as the EOC, CRE and DRC for access to expert support and guidance while ensuring confidentiality – for example for advice on legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act.

d. The organisation’s business plan includes action to “equality assure” existing and new resources and material, and take action on any shortfalls.

e. The organisation adopts a variety of delivery methods to reach all young people such as access through local community radio and voluntary groups.
f. The organisation ensures that:
   - it has adequate advocacy and support mechanisms for those considering ‘non-traditional’ options;
   - its communications systems reach and encourage participation from all sectors of the community;
   - all resources and material, including those produced ‘in-house’, reflect the local population and promote positive messages and images on gender, ethnicity, disability and other areas of potential discrimination;
   - its service equips young people themselves to recognise and counter discriminatory and stereotypical behaviour.

3. Management Information and Data Systems

Principle - Every Connexions Service will need to establish client record, management information and tracking systems to monitor the effectiveness of action to counter stereotyping and discrimination. This is essential to enable an organisation to establish where it is, and the progress it makes to meet its responsibilities for countering bias and stereotyping.

A best practice approach would encompass the following elements:

a. Part of this process involves the setting of targets and performance measures. This covers all five areas.

b. The organisation’s data systems, including monthly reports and activity surveys, are designed to capture and process ethnic, gender and disability information so that all desegregated information is fed back to the Board (summary information to be passed back to DfES). Action is taken on the information gathered including using MI to set local targets and performance measures.

c. The information collected is consistent with national definitions and data headings to enable national comparisons to be made.

d. The organisation conducts surveys, including sample surveys, to monitor and inform the business planning process – ensuring feedback is available to young people.

4. Work with Other Organisations

Principle - Every Connexions Service will need to work with outside organisations, local networks and communities, to develop and take forward strategies that promote equality of opportunity and challenge stereotyping and discrimination including; organising events, exchanging information and sharing good practice. To do this, each service will need to have a comprehensive ‘map’ of the relevant local and national organisations.

A best practice approach would encompass the following elements:

a. The organisation:
   - takes advantage of existing material – e.g. DRC and EOC material; CRE ethnic monitoring guide etc.;
   - ensures it works with the full range of community groups;
   - involves the local community in the drawing up of the organisation’s discrete equal opportunities policy document as well as other policy documents;
   - works closely with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and employers to ensure in particular that provision and opportunities are available that enable young people to follow their chosen path;
   - works with Learning Partnerships to exchange information with others and to co-ordinate a strategy and targets for work in this area that can be shared by all those, including schools, etc. working to support young people;
   - includes equal opportunities as a theme in its regular consultations with young people, parents and local community and voluntary organisations;
   - includes equal opportunities as an aspect of the events and activities that are organised to ‘capacity build’ in the community to enable groups etc. to be consulted, to participate and to act as leaders or agents for change.
b. Equality of opportunity is an integral part of all partnerships and relationships include:
   • work to promote equal opportunities and challenging stereotyping – e.g. through work experience placements, the provision of positive role models, provision of INSET for teachers and lecturers; mentoring schemes; adoption of quality standards.
   • mechanisms for feedback and the exchange of information such as the production of joint reports on activity, highlighting successes to be shared with partners, Learning Partnerships etc.

c. Consultation is carried out through events targeted at specific groups of people, as well as involving them in mainstream activities.

d. The service is able to demonstrate that it has the support and confidence of the local community, and that it has taken steps to enable local groups to participate fully.

5. Internal Personnel Practice

Principle - Every Connexions Service will need to ensure equal opportunities and promoting diversity is at the heart of the organisation’s personnel policies including establishing equal opportunities as an essential element of their training and development plan, and increasing the number of employees from under represented groups.

A best practice approach would encompass the following elements:

a. The organisation:
   • conducts a regular audit of the composition of staff, including board members, to assess representation by all local groups;
   • adopts positive action with appropriate targets to ensure that its staffing more fully reflects the local population;
   • includes equal opportunities in the appraisal of all staff;
   • ensures all staff at every level are equal opportunity aware and proactive;
   • gathers and shares good practice – e.g. by collaborating with other services, seeking advice from national bodies such as the CRE, EOC and DRC.

b. The organisation’s recruitment procedures promote diversity. The advertising of jobs takes account of where adverts are placed and the language in them, job descriptions and the real needs of the jobs, recruitment literature and the verbal and pictorial imagery. Applications can be returned in alternative and accessible formats by disabled people such as e-mail and audio tapes. In addition, the terms and conditions of posts are flexible enough to encourage and maintain diversity in the organisation’s workforce.

c. The organisation has policies that encourage diversity in career progression so that there is a culture of opportunity for advancement for all staff. This is evidenced through career development opportunities and training, and through the way interview panels are trained and managed.

d. The organisation’s training plan includes equal opportunities both as an integrated part of the overall training and as a discrete topic for all staff – not just the Personal Adviser. It:
   • is based on a training needs analysis, using all available intelligence in gathering information about equal opportunities training wants and needs – from the staff members, from line management and from customer and community feedback (which may need to be proactively gathered);
   • equips staff with an understanding of, and skill to tackle, institutional racism and other forms of discrimination as well as bullying and harassment;
   • enables staff to access, understand and apply messages from management information and other sources of data.
A guide to further reading


Bentley, T. and Oakley, K et al The Real Deal (London: Demos et al, 1999).


Department of Health. Quality Protects research briefings. A series of research briefings to help front line managers and practitioners base their work with children and families in need on reliable evidence (2000-01).

Dept of Psychology, Queens University Belfast. A Review of approaches to involving young people in a public service (2000).


NCVYS. NCVYS Position paper and youth participation strategy (London: NCVYS, 1999)

Oldfield, Carolyn. ‘Mapping youth consultation’ Youth Action no.69, (Spring 2000) pages 14-15


Youth@now. Making it happen (London: Youth@now, 2000).
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Listening to and taking account of the views of young people in the design and delivery of Connexions is a key principle. Anthony Evans and Joy Danby are responsible for the policy lead in this area and as well as leading on this Guide are gathering evidence of involving young people and disseminating this good practice. If you would like to contribute and share your experiences, please contact them on 0114 259 3756 or E.mail anthony.evans@dfes.gsi.gov.uk.